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THE FINGER OF GODHENG

Impressions from Old Masters



ETHEL ALLEN MURPHY





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THE ANGEL OF THOUGHT

THE
ANGEL OF THOUGHT
and Other Poems

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Impressions from Old Masters
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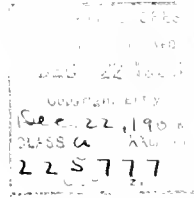
ETHEL ALLEN MURPHY



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TO MY FRIEND AND TEACHER
ANNA J. HAMILTON

THE WRITER WISHES TO EXPRESS HER
GRATITUDE TO THE ART DEPARTMENT OF
THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY, WHOSE KIND-
NESS IN LENDING THE PICTURES WHICH SUG-
GESTED THE VERSES, AND WHOSE MISSION IN
OPENING SOME OF THEIR MEANINGS TO HER
SPIRIT, HAVE HELPED TO MAKE POSSIBLE
THIS LITTLE BOOK.

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Te Deum Laudamus
by Fra Angelico

THE ANGEL OF THOUGHT

(Suggested by a Fra Angelico Angel)

ANGEL of Thought, meseems God winged
thee so,

And crowned thine head with passion fine
as flame,

And made thy lifted face too pure for shame,
With eyes and brow a mirror to His glow;—

And gave thy lips a golden trump, that, though
Long years have passed since other angels came
To work the mighty wonders of His name,—

In God's own name and man's, thyself shalt go
Forever on strong pinions to and fro,

And round the earth reverberating blow

The mute, world-shaking music of the mind:

That thou might'st make as naught all space
and time,

And thrill in mystic oneness through mankind,

Yet dwell in each, inviolate, sublime.



The Annunciation
by Botticelli

ANNUNCIATION

(From the picture by Botticelli)

I

KNEELING in prayer, her spirit rapt
above,

She meets with God, Who bendeth, brood-
ing low,

In vast compassion humanward, and so,

There comes upon her life the power of Love:

Rising — behold! with pinions like a dove,

An angel with a rod where row on row

Of chalice'd lilies spill supernal glow, —

Which all her thought to wonder mute doth move,

Then falls upon the rapture of her soul,

Dimly some vision of Gethsemane,

Athwart the Resurrection's shining goal,

And with uplifted hand she pleads as One

Shall pray in night of darkest agony,

“ This cup remove, — yet, Lord, Thy Will be
done.”

ANNUNCIATION

(From a picture by Botticelli)

II

IMMORTAL eloquence of mystic Art!
How strangely o'er oblivion and gray time,
That hand doth speak, as in the painter's
prime
It uttered thus his own and Mary's heart.
At sight of it, what rich conjectures start,
Adown the years, what wistful Aves chime,
'That wake the soul to rapture how sublime,
Wherewith we, too, must bear in Him our part!
For unto each to bring redemption's share,
Whereby adown the ages Christ is borne,
'There comes the angel of the lilyed rod;
And though our souls with anguish sore are torn,
We pray once more the world-o'ercoming prayer,
And then is born in us the Word of God.



The Visitation
by Dürer

THE VISITATION

*(From the picture in Durer's series on "The
Life of the Virgin")*

THE mountains wonder from their cloudy
height,
The skies look on and grow more deep
with awe;
From these two women, earthly loves
withdraw,
And leave them shrined in some ensphering
light,—
More fine than that which greets the earthly
sight,
More glorious than that Creation saw,
When, from abeyance to primeval law,
There burst the dawn from out the womb of
night;
Yet are all things unchanged around them,—
these,
The ancient hills, the town, the quiet trees,
The household presences through which they
grope
Blind to all else but to each other's eyes,
Wherein, transforming heaven and earth, there
lies
Sublime effulgence of immortal Hope.



*The Madonna of the
Magnificat, by Botticelli*

A BOTTICELLI MADONNA

I

THE WONDERING ANGELS

BEHOLD! the Tabernacle of God's Will
This woman's form enshrineth. What
is this,

More glorious than all our age-long bliss,
Which shines within the shadow of her sill?
How shall we lift this strangeness which doth fill
Her human heart to breaking,— we who miss
In our immortal joy, the enlight'ning kiss
Of sorrow's bitter lips whence comforts thrill?
How shall we sing to her of joys to come,
To her who bears upon her breast the sun
Of death's dread gloom and heaven's undying
light?

Lean close, ah, close, about her from above,—
Behold upon the mildness of her love
Enthroned the terrors of His Holy Might!



The Madonna of the Pomegranate
by Botticelli

A BOTTICELLI MADONNA

II

THE MOURNFUL MOTHER

O CHILD of mine, my little Son, alas!
Beneath the sunlight of Thy gentle eyes,
Too soon, too soon, what fateful shadows
rise,
Like night foretold in some sweet woodland
glass?
On tender feet that scarcely bow the grass,
What stains are those of ripe pomegranate
dyes? —
When on my breast Thy head in slumber lies,
What thorns are those that through my heart
do pass?
And round about these crowds of haunting forms
That burn their splendor through my dimmest
dreams!
O little Child, Thou Wonder too divine,
Thy precious body all my bosom warms
With mine own blood, but oftentimes it seems,
Too dearly loved,—that yet Thou art not mine.



*The Madonna of the Rose
Garden, by Botticelli*

A BOTTICELLI MADONNA

III

THE LOVING CHRIST

THE little hands returning wistfully
From birdlike wand'rings, ever come to
rest,
On fostering hand on tender cheek or breast;
The upturned eyes, with loving certainty
Seek ever the grave face where broodingly,
The mother-soul by yearning love opprest,
With wings down-drooped, seems folded o'er
the nest
Where lies the Hope of all humanity.
And she His World, and He her Calvary,—
He wraps her round with all the mystery
Of love predestined for earth's needy ones;
“Be comforted,” it seems He fain would say,
“O mother mine, there dawns an Easter day,
And thou in me hast mothered many sons.”



*Angel Crowned with Jasmine
Wreath, by Botticelli*

THE ANGEL OF THE JASMINE WREATH

(From a picture by Botticelli, of the Madonna and Child with Angels,— in the Borghese Gallery)

INEFFABLE angel, with the jasmine
wreathed,

Wherefrom the sweetness over brow and lips,
And luminous white eyelids tremulously slips,
A visible essence from thy beauty breathed,—
The pure and pensive marvel of thy face is
sheathed

In tresses softer than the bloom of night,
Wherefrom the dampness on thy forehead drips
With dew from out God's meadows infinite,—
Thy face, itself, a lily filled with light:—
Thyself the youngest of God's angels and most
fair,

Bearing His latest breath and blessing on thine-
hair,

Thou comest fresh from looking on thy Lord;
And all is well, and all is filled for thee
With eloquent, mute wonder of His Word.

Oh, lean a little forth thy lips to me,
For I am fain of peace amid this earthly strife,
And I would drink, a spent soul, thirstily,
From out thy never-failing cup of life.



Angel, from a pencil sketch, by Botticelli

A PRAYER FOR THE FOLLOWERS OF
IDEAL BEAUTY

(With a pencil sketch of an Angel by Botticelli)

THOU in whose All no work imperfect
stands,

Thou who dost gaze on Beauty's unveiled
face,

Grant to Thy children Thy sustaining grace,

When low at length have run the daylight sands, —

When, though their day was set to Thy com-
mands,

They bow contritely in prayer's holy place,

Because through strivings beauty-wards they
trace

The sad misshapings of their earthly hands:

Grant them at eve a soul devoutly still,

Grant them in dreams a vision of Thy light,

Grant them at morn a sorrow purged away

Into the peace of all-absolving night,

Star in the dawnlight of a fairer day,

Nearer the blossom of Thy perfect Will.

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